

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**RELEVANCE OF NATIONAL GUARD UNITS  
IN THE PREPARATION AND RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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With the events of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the aftermath that followed in New Orleans, the President and others stated that perhaps DOD, and more specifically USNORTHCOM, should play a much larger role in the response to natural disasters. This paper will show that the response to these devastating events should remain with FEMA, the first responders, and when necessary, the National Guard. FEMA, with some modifications, can again be the management organization it was designed to be. USNORTHCOM is not best positioned or prepared to carry out this type of response due to states' sovereignty, legal limitations, resource allocation, and other issues. The National Guard has the capabilities, force structure, and experience to accomplish these specialized missions. These troops often come from the communities and states affected by natural disasters, therefore, giving them certain timing and local relationship advantages. At the operational level, one specific unit, Alabama's 167<sup>th</sup> TSC which has been newly assigned to USNORTHCOM, should be utilized for the establishment of CONPLANS in all high risk areas. Furthermore, the 167<sup>th</sup> TSC should be activated and employed to coordinate and manage the logistics operations for all major natural disasters in the continental United States.



## RELEVANCE OF NATIONAL GUARD UNITS IN THE PREPARATION AND RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS

Part of President Bush's response to September 11<sup>th</sup> was his activation of all of the United States' instruments of power and his direction of our government to prepare a new strategy for the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. One such response was the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2001. With the organization of DHS, twenty-two federal agencies were moved into this new department. Another response was the creation of the United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) in Colorado Springs, Colorado in 2002. The command's primary mission is homeland defense and civil support. A third response was the creation of several comprehensive and detailed strategies for securing our homeland, including: the National Strategy for Homeland Security, Strategies for Weapons of Mass Destruction, National Response Plans, National Preparedness Plans, National Incident Management Plans, and the Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support. These strategies, as well as the mission of USNORTHCOM, almost exclusively outline the active and layered defense of terrorist attacks, but vaguely discuss the importance of natural disaster preparedness and response. It is therefore presumed that nearly all emphasis since that time has been placed on preparing for responses to terrorism-related events rather than natural disasters.

The daily protection of the United States from attack is the highest priority of the Department of Defense (DOD).<sup>1</sup> The way in which our military traditionally protects the United States is by projecting our power abroad. Even as we continue to fight the War on Terrorism (WOT) overseas, the events of September 11, 2001, have taught us that we are also subject to attack in our homeland. We must be resilient in the defense of our homeland in the future.

Likewise, Hurricane Katrina's devastation of New Orleans in 2005 emphasized that more attention and planning needs to be allocated to these types of homeland disasters and catastrophic events. To the American citizen, loss of life, whether resulting from a terrorist with a vest of explosives or from a failed levee system, must be equally scrutinized by the federal government, who incidentally, most often is assigned blame following domestic catastrophes.

Shortly after the events of Hurricane Katrina, President George W. Bush remarked, "I want Congress to consider putting the Pentagon, not the state and local agencies, in charge of responding to large scale natural disasters in the future."<sup>2</sup> The media, many politicians, and some of the public placed the blame for the lack of coordination on the federal government and its related agencies. Though some attention must be placed on the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the lack of coordination demonstrated by the civilian leadership

at the local and state level in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina is not a true indicator of the preparation in the remaining Gulf Coast region.

Even with the President's remarks regarding DOD playing a larger role in the response to homeland natural disasters, this paper asserts that the response should remain with FEMA, the first responders, and when necessary, the National Guard. To that end, this paper will discuss some issues with FEMA and offer suggestions for making it a more efficient organization in order to fulfill its role. Next, this paper will highlight some legal, resource, and other issues associated with the proposal of using USNORTHCOM in disaster response activities. Finally, this paper will discuss how the National Guard's existing capabilities, force structure, and experience make it capable of fulfilling this disaster response role.

#### The Use of DHS and FEMA in Natural Disasters

The Secretary of FEMA became a cabinet level position during the Carter administration. With this appointment, the agency was given a great deal of authority. However, its leadership was largely chosen based on relationship rather than capability which therefore limited its credibility. During the Clinton years, FEMA improved under the stewardship of Secretary James Lee Whitt.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, FEMA became known as an agency that could coordinate relief efforts fairly efficiently. With regard to larger scale natural disasters, however, recent history has shown that FEMA may not be the best organization for planning and managing these efforts. Only a few months prior to Katrina making landfall, Homeland Defense Secretary Michael Chertoff proposed that FEMA not prepare for natural disasters but instead only respond to them.<sup>4</sup> FEMA's ensuing response to Katrina could lend some validity to his statement, and the results show that with FEMA's current organization, it is not best suited for preparing and responding to catastrophic events. Accordingly, FEMA's role should be analyzed and the agency made more efficient as the management organization it was designed to be.

In March 2003, President Bush and his National Security Council reassigned FEMA's Secretary from that of a cabinet level position to one working under the auspices of DHS.<sup>5</sup> Many have said that once removed from its cabinet status, FEMA became buried with 22 other federal agencies in homeland security and lost its focus on natural disasters.<sup>6</sup> In many situations when the federal government is expanded, as in the case of DHS, these additional layers translate to slower decisionmaking or sometimes lack of decisions altogether. Slow decisionmaking was evident with Katrina, and those results were unacceptable.

In addition to the bureaucracy, the leadership of FEMA was called into question after Hurricane Katrina. FEMA Director, Mike Brown, had previously worked in the organization as

general counsel and had no specific training or background in disaster coordination or relief. Within a week after Katrina's landfall and the lack of coordination by FEMA in Louisiana, Brown was relieved of his duties, and a formal investigation began. Was he made a scapegoat or were he and his organization simply incapable of performing the job with which they were tasked? Many people would argue that the results of Hurricane Katrina were largely due to very little planning at the local and state level, which perhaps supports the former assertion about the FEMA Director. There are a number of specific examples, however, that illustrate mistakes for which Brown and the agency were directly responsible, thus suggesting that the latter position also has validity.

It could be argued that the inadequate (and in some cases absent) decisionmaking was a result of FEMA's bureaucratic structure under DHS. Some examples underscoring the organization's inability to organize and execute during Katrina's aftermath include the following: (1) Despite being warned that Hurricane Katrina would hit with catastrophic effects, Brown waited until only five hours before landfall to mobilize 1,000 federal workers to deal with response to the impending storm.<sup>7</sup> (2) Florida citizens armed with a bevy of air boats arrived in New Orleans ready to rescue stranded Louisianans, but FEMA prevented them from entering the city. (3) While people lay suffering in the streets of the city and in the Super Dome, the U.S.S. Baatan, an amphibious ship complete with a medical facility containing operating rooms, 600 medical beds, and 1,200 sailors and marines, sat nearby off the Gulf coast and yet was not fully utilized. (4) Allies from around the world offered rescue supplies and were told by FEMA to stand by until they could figure out what to do with them.<sup>8</sup> These examples illustrate that during catastrophic events, FEMA under its current organization is not suited to provide the command and control and emergency management that it was designed to provide. With the events in Louisiana and the possibility of similar ones elsewhere in the future, strong FEMA leadership is paramount.

In FEMA's defense, the perception that they should have had commodities flowing into the state the moment the hurricane had passed was incorrect, and it brings to the forefront the lack of understanding of states' sovereignty. The governor of the affected state must first request the President of the United States declare their state a natural disaster before requesting federal government assistance. The governor of Mississippi did this in advance, while the governor of Louisiana was slower in requesting assistance. Moreover, FEMA is just that, a management organization. It is responsible for providing the required commodities requested by the affected states' Emergency Management Agency (EMA) director, normally to a staging area located in an adjoining non-affected state. It then works with independent contractors to move these

commodities down to a secure county distribution point. At this point, the affected state takes control of the commodities utilizing first responders or National Guard Soldiers. FEMA can set the wheels in motion to have the initial materials pre-staged, but if the governor does not request FEMA assistance or provide secured local distribution points, the federal government cannot legally force the materials into the state. Thus, it could also be argued that the lack of local and state preparedness and subsequent response compounded the overall failure in Louisiana.

In stark contrast to FEMA's poor coordination with Louisiana during the Katrina disaster was its response to the four major hurricanes that hit Florida and Alabama just one year prior in 2004. Hurricane Ivan, in particular, wreaked the most devastation at Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Alabama, and Pensacola, Florida. With Ivan, these states worked in close coordination with FEMA, each state's Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), and their National Guard to deliver food, ice, and water within 24 hours of the storm's landfall. This synchronized response suggests that the system is not broken in all states.

The US has spent an estimated \$236 billion for homeland security since 2001.<sup>9</sup> While it is obvious that improvements have been made to airport security, it is less clear money has been properly apportioned to improve the ability of first responders. For example, during Katrina the first responders' communications equipment became inoperable shortly after the storm made landfall seemingly because they lacked batteries for their phones and radios.<sup>10</sup> Michelle Flournoy, a Senior Advisor on International Security Programs at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said this "...glaring example of lack of interoperable communications post-Katrina is unforgivable after the events of 9/11 had put the spotlight on this problem as a priority item that needed to be fixed."<sup>11</sup> Had more funding previously been made available, equipment other than battery powered phones and radios could have been procured and utilized. When the first responders were unable to properly communicate, a break down in command and control, as well as in discipline, ensued.

While the states perhaps prefer control over this budgeted spending, there are some cases where this decentralized methodology creates issues that need consideration as well. Perhaps this communication breakdown could have been avoided had a more centralized approach been taken to procuring and distributing the equipment. Three important considerations come to mind. First, if DHS had purchased the equipment through a negotiated bulk contract, the need for each state to individually research and procure the equipment would have been eliminated, resulting in a manpower savings. Second, if the procurement had been obtained in bulk, a larger cost savings could have been realized. Third, the single sourcing of



the equipment would have ensured not only that all the states had the proper base and ancillary equipment, but also that there would be no interoperability issue between the cities, states, and agencies. Either way, proper financial management and oversight appears to be lacking within DHS and FEMA, as well as between those entities and downstream authorities.

Until Hurricane Katrina, very few questioned the preparedness and execution of FEMA. Disaster relief within all of the southeastern states appeared to be working well. When a disaster of Katrina's magnitude occurs, however, flaws in plans and preparation become exposed. There are numerous suggestions for correcting FEMA's organizational and leadership issues. First and foremost, FEMA should be removed from DHS and its director reassigned as a cabinet level position. In the December issue of *Homeland Security Today*, David Heyman who is the Director of Homeland Security at the Center for Strategic and International Studies was quoted as saying, "People don't want an extra layer of bureaucracy; they want the agency head to have full access to the President."<sup>12</sup> In that same story, James Carafano, Senior Fellow for National Security and Homeland Security stated he and Secretary Chertoff agree FEMA should be carved back out of DHS, report directly to the President, and concentrate solely on the preparedness functions.<sup>13</sup> Establishing the best place for FEMA to sit on an organizational chart is simply not enough. It is critical for the administration to appoint a leader with solid credentials and an experienced track record in organizational, financial, and emergency management to correct the internal and collaborative issues seemingly plaguing the organization. Additionally, measures must be taken to ensure that FEMA receives adequate resources in funding, staffing, communications, and other technological equipment needed to plan and execute missions with its constituents.

#### Implications with DOD as the Lead Federal Agency for Natural Disasters

In addition to the President of the United States, many in the media and in politics have called for DOD to take a more active role in natural disaster responses. Some of these decrees were based on emotional responses in the aftermath of Katrina. However, legal limitations, resource allocation concerns, and interagency issues exist as to why a more involved role by DOD in response to these disasters is not advisable.

After criticism to the response of Katrina, President Bush requested there be consideration given to the use of USNORTHCOM and associated units as the first DOD responders to local and state government in the event of a natural disaster. In this scenario, USNORTHCOM would assume command and control of the military response in any state or multi-state disaster. USNORTHCOM was established in Colorado during the process of

organizing and preparing for homeland defense. Per the official USNORTHCOM homepage, the mission of USNORTHCOM is to "...conduct operations to deter, prevent, defeat, and mitigate threats and aggression aimed at the United States, its territories and interests within the assigned area of responsibility and, as directed by the President or Secretary of Defense, provide military assistance to civil authorities including consequence management operations."<sup>14</sup>

A primary disadvantage in using DOD as the first responder is that it violates states' rights. In fact, unless the governor has requested assistance from the President, the Secretary of Defense cannot legally send DOD units to assist a state. The importance of individual state sovereignty in the American system of government cannot be overstated. The governors of all 50 states jealously guard their states rights and few, if any, would look favorably on *federal troops* taking the lead in response to a natural disaster without first being asked to assist. More importantly, the governors already have an instrument of military power to call upon during a natural disaster, the citizen Soldiers of the National Guard. The governor is the chief of command for each state and as so directs the activities of the state's military troops through the state's National Guard Adjutant General. Additionally, in place today, each state already has a Joint Task Force Headquarters for command and control of all operations. Finally, through an agreement called the EMAC, each governor can call upon other states' governors directly or via the National Guard Bureau to augment his forces and equipment to meet the operational needs of the situation.<sup>15</sup>

Another legal limitation exists regarding sending DOD troops into a state. Under the statute known as the Posse Comitatus Act (18 USC § 1385), DOD units are prohibited from assisting in law enforcement. An example of this occurred during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina when armed criminals were committing atrocities in the streets of New Orleans. Only National Guard Soldiers were permitted to assist local law enforcement in the disarming and capturing of these lawless individuals. Exceptions to this rule exist if Marshal Law is declared or if the President of the United States relies on his constitutional authority to maintain public order and domestic tranquility. This type of action was last taken in California in April 1992 during the Rodney King riots. However, because it is deemed by the government as a measure of last resort, the declaration of Marshal Law is not a readily viable option for DOD to expect when deployed to states in support of natural disasters. From a law enforcement standpoint, the National Guard is the best solution when using the military instrument of power.

In addition to legal implications, there are military operational issues which call into question the use of the DOD in natural disaster responses. Due to ongoing commitments in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the WOT, the DOD in general, and specifically the Army and Marines,

find themselves stretched thin. To put DOD as the lead federal agency would needlessly add to the burden on the active duty force. For example, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, due to heavy commitments to Iraq and Afghanistan, DOD had to turn to the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division. This unit is the US Army's premier rapid reaction force, ready to deploy around the world to protect the national security interests of the United States. Use of this highly skilled unit in a homeland disaster relief capacity diminishes its intended role and its ability to deploy worldwide on a moment's notice. In a time period when our country is at war and the operational tempo is great, this poor method of resource allocation puts enormous stress on the existing DOD force structure and detracts from current training and readiness.

Finally, interagency issues exist which hamper the use of DOD in a more involved natural disaster response role. It has been noted that as USNORTHCOM develops relationships with DHS, they continue to find shortcomings in their information systems and communications equipment. Some potential problems were highlighted in a Defense Science Board report in 2004. Their concerns included: "(1) ...new organizations, along with new and changing missions level roles, responsibilities, and interfaces remain unresolved or immature; (2) some DOD organizations appear unclear on what information is required in the interagency arena for homeland security; (3) information sharing breakdowns, like the aircraft almost targeted during President Reagan's funeral ceremonies, are still occurring; and (4) current information sharing methods and processes are not scaleable and may be inadequate."<sup>16</sup> All of these shortcomings would be magnified when bridging USNORTHCOM with the myriad of state and local agencies as would be necessary for optimal coordination in the response to a natural disaster under DOD control. Moreover, there are many state agencies trained and qualified to mobilize during disasters, and continuous operations likely will occur more efficiently for the state government who has long standing relationships than with the disruption from doing so under an outside agency like DOD. Creating additional interagency challenges by giving USNORTHCOM responsibility for disaster relief efforts detracts from their focus on homeland defense.

In the 2005 National Defense Strategy, defending the US homeland is the number one priority for DOD; therefore, USNORTHCOM has and should be focused on terrorism, mirroring the effort of DHS.<sup>17</sup> Because the threat of a terrorist attack is realistic, USNORTHCOM and DOD need to continue to focus their efforts and resources on the preparation for defending and responding to just such an attack. Diverting their focus on this vital responsibility by making DOD the lead federal agency would be risky.

### Broader National Guard Response is the Answer

Making DOD the first responder in the event of a natural disaster is not only a poor use of manpower, but also an ineffective use of military power since the National Guard is already capable of fulfilling this role. By utilizing its manpower, law enforcement, and communications capabilities, the National Guard is and continues to be the best force to execute the requirements of disaster relief. The Guard has been called to duty beginning with the Revolutionary War when 164,000 volunteers were activated and has participated in every major conflict since. Yet, wars are not the only missions these soldiers and airmen prepare for and respond to. Our nation's Guardsmen respond to floods, wild fires, earthquakes, blizzards, and are even called to duty for riots and crowd control. Guardsmen are citizen Soldiers – the product of small towns and communities from across our nation. They train and prepare for many missions within their state boundaries and in assistance to other states if called upon. The Director of the National Guard Bureau, LTG Roger C. Shultz, said about our Guard Soldiers, “These men and women bring real-world experience and provide capabilities to address domestic disasters and foreign conflicts.”<sup>18</sup> When activated, these Soldiers often know personally the local first responders. In most cases, they are also familiar with the locales to which they are responding. Conversely, DOD units do not have the local relationships or knowledge, and in cases where time is of the essence, this lack of information can be a hindrance.

Whenever a situation arises, the National Guard represents the military force that a governor can call upon.<sup>19</sup> The type of troops and the capabilities represented in each state provide the governor with the ability to respond to essentially every type of emergency. Specifically, these Soldiers can provide defense of critical infrastructure, relief and recovery operations, and humanitarian relief. Since 1906 when 30,000 Guard members were activated for the San Francisco earthquake and fire, there have been numerous examples where citizen Soldiers have been called up for response to our nation's natural disasters.<sup>20</sup>

One could argue that by calling DOD units to a given area, they have the advantage of having all of the resources needed to respond to natural disasters. To the contrary, the Army and Air National Guards have at their disposal not only the benefit of years of training together, but all of the major assets required for these missions as well. These capabilities, which are part of the force structure in most states, include: key assets for command and control, joint force headquarters, rapid reaction forces, civil support teams, communication, engineering, air, medical, decontamination, and water purification capabilities. Those states which do not have all of these assets due to shortages or force structure, are encouraged to use EMAC as an

essential force multiplier. Additionally, in most states, the Adjutant General serves as the Director of Emergency Management and as the Director of Homeland Security. This state of preparedness further solidifies the notion that the states want, deserve, and are able to take a more active role in these events.

Like DOD, the Army National Guard continues to expand the use of enterprise information technology. One active initiative is to use National Guard telecommunications and video teleconferencing resources to link Civil Support Teams across states as needed for the support and execution of their missions, including the missions of homeland security and defense. Another initiative using a web-based, portal technology provides functionality for displaying real-time unit status down to the individual Soldier level. This application is expected to improve the Army National Guard's capability to accomplish DOD and disaster response missions.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, the Army National Guard has implemented secure data links to the Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ) in all states and territories, and utilizes modern wide area network (WAN) technology with redundancy and network security. These critical communications capabilities provide real-time operational connectivity and are essential to providing a common picture to local, state, and federal agencies. The Army National Guard's continued efforts in this arena augment its position of relevance in responding to stateside natural disasters.

In the past, there have been funding constraints when activating National Guard Soldiers for disaster relief efforts in multiple states. However, Congress amended Title 32 of the US Code in the passage of the 2005 Defense Authorization Act. This Act not only enhanced the Guard's domestic Homeland Defense and Security mission capability, but also authorized the funding of homeland defense activities by the National Guard, upon approval of the Secretary of Defense.<sup>22</sup> Placing Soldiers on Title 32 status at the beginning of activation eliminates several funding issues. For example, until the events of Hurricane Katrina, National Guard troops were activated under State Active Duty (SAD). Under SAD, the Governor can activate his National Guard personnel to active duty in response to natural or man-made disasters. States are responsible for initial funding which will then be reimbursed by DOD at a later time. However, with the frequency of hurricanes occurring from July through October, the operational budgets of states in the Gulf Coast region can become severely strained while waiting for this reimbursement from one or more disasters. Additionally, the SAD system works best when just a single state is affected but becomes more complicated when multiple states must be supported. For example, when troops are activated under SAD to support another state, the governor of the receiving state must agree to reimburse the governor of the providing state before troops can be deployed. In the event of multi-state natural disasters, National Guard

Soldiers should be activated under Title 32 status, funded by DOD, and mobilized to strategic locations in preparation for a disaster. During the Katrina response, Lieutenant General Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, requested that the Secretary of Defense transfer all activated National Guard Soldiers from SAD to Title 32 to eliminate some of these issues.<sup>23</sup> Immediate placement of National Guard troops on Title 32 instead of SAD will be beneficial to all states of activated Soldiers and should be the process followed in the future.

Regardless of how the National Guard is funded in response to a natural disaster, the Guard already has an established strategic response plan of pre-positioning troops based on intelligence of an impending natural disaster and on the newly designed rapid reaction forces at the governor's disposal. Under this plan, a rapid reaction force consisting of one Army Guard company of 125 Soldiers can deploy within 4 to 8 hours and a battalion-size element of 500 to 600 Soldiers can deploy in 24 to 36 hours. With an anticipated event such as a hurricane's landfall, the needed force can be alerted and called to duty. Rapid reaction forces are usually pre-positioned in National Guard armories close to but not in, harm's way of the oncoming disaster. Upon arrival at the disaster site, the unit commander begins coordination with the mayor or EMA representative to coordinate missions to be carried out by these initial units. As witnessed from personal experience, when this procedure is implemented as designed, it is effective.

Despite the heavy troop commitment to Iraq and Afghanistan, the National Guard was able to mobilize and deploy over 50,000 Soldiers and Airmen for relief efforts during Hurricane Katrina.<sup>24</sup> This response illustrated that the National Guard remains a viable option as the military first responder to emergencies such as natural disasters. Maintaining this capability is a result of a commitment of each governor to deploy no more than 50% of a state's citizen Soldiers overseas at any given time.<sup>25</sup>

At the operational level, the National Guard can provide an immediate impact with the utilization of its own 167<sup>th</sup> Theater Sustainment Command (TSC) in the planning and response to natural disasters. In FM 3-93, *The Army in Theater Operations*, a TSC is a "...multifunctional support command that works at the operational level with linkage to both the strategic and tactical level support organizations and agencies."<sup>26</sup> A TSC headquarters is structured to manage logistics for Army theaters and can manage the logistics requirements in all future large scale and catastrophic natural disasters. In the current Army transformation construct, TSC's will have a Theater Sustainment Headquarters with two Deployable Command Posts and can command from 1 to 6 Sustainment Brigades.

Beginning in October 2007, the Alabama National Guard's 167<sup>th</sup> TSC was given the mission of supporting USNORTHCOM. The 167<sup>th</sup> TSC has the command and control and planning capability to mobilize, mitigate, and provide essential logistic management to any disaster of any magnitude. As such, this reorganization should be fast tracked, with coordination and funding beginning immediately in order to also utilize the TSC in natural disaster responses on the homeland. The 167<sup>th</sup> TSC should be provided the resources and man days necessary to immediately begin working with FEMA to evaluate existing plans, develop Contingency Plans for each FEMA region, and outline distribution systems for commodities within each region. In this capacity, this unit should be given Mission Essential Tasks (METL) that focus their homeland security mission on planning and executing responses to any natural disaster in the continental United States and its territories.

Recently, the 167<sup>th</sup> TSC and its subordinate commands have responded to every major hurricane and natural disaster in its home state of Alabama, as well as responded to crises in Mississippi and Louisiana in 2005. Speaking from personal observation in 2004 during Hurricane Ivan, this unit clearly had a more accurate picture of in transit and total asset visibility compared to FEMA. Because of the multifunctional support command and distribution-based logistics capabilities of the TSC, expanding its mission for the planning, preparation, and response to natural disasters within USNORTHCOM AOR would be advantageous to the nation.

#### Conclusion

FEMA's shortcomings were illuminated during the aftermath of Katrina, pointing to some necessary improvements for the agency. A first priority for correcting FEMA's organizational issues is to move FEMA out from under DHS and position it as a separate agency reporting to the President as was the structure prior to 2003. Another critical task calls for the administration to appoint a leader with solid credentials and experience to begin rectifying some of the organizational, financial, and management issues within FEMA and between FEMA and the first responders. Finally, measures must be taken to ensure that FEMA receives adequate resources in funding, staffing, communications, and other technological equipment needed to plan and execute missions with its constituents.

Even though it was suggested by the President to use DOD as the first responders to natural disasters, there are several disadvantages with this approach including states' sovereignty issues and legal limitations around DOD participating in law enforcement activities. More importantly, the use of DOD in natural disaster responses over and above its

commitments abroad would place an unnecessary burden on an already stressed force structure.

Despite the President's statement that DOD needs a more active role in future catastrophic events, this paper disagrees and, conversely, asserts that the National Guard is and has been the most logical military element of power to handle these crises. With respect to Hurricane Katrina in particular, the National Guard responded immediately and according to Donna Miles of Armed Forces Magazine, "...demonstrated it is fully capable of responding to major catastrophic natural disasters stateside while still continuing to support the war on terror overseas."<sup>27</sup> These soldiers and airmen were providing as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense Paul McHale described, "...a full range of services including rescuing stranded persons as soon as the storm had passed."<sup>28</sup>

Playing a lead role in natural disaster responses, the National Guard already has the force structure required for quick and efficient response. Assistant Secretary McHale, stated, "The strong logistics backbone and ready availability of the National Guard make it ideally suited to a prompt, effective response in remediating the consequences of a catastrophic event, whether a natural disaster or a terrorist attack."<sup>29</sup> McHale went on to say that the Guard's response to Hurricane Katrina, "...proved the merit of that approach."<sup>30</sup> The Guard is positioned in each state, and therefore can work closely with state and local governments to build cohesive partnerships with all entities involved. Additionally, the National Guard has an established network of JFHQ, EMAC's, and other agreements and agencies crucial for immediate execution of operations. At the operational level, the 167<sup>th</sup> TSC, should be given the authority and resources to work in coordination with FEMA to revise all CONPLANS and prepare future plans on areas of increased natural disaster probability within USNORTHCOM AOR. Because of their logistic command and control capability, the TSC is logically situated to handle regional or national level disaster relief operations.

Because the occurrence of natural disasters is not a question of *if* but rather a question of *when*, the safety and well-being of American citizens are at risk if we are not prepared to respond. Every taxpayer deserves and expects to be protected by his government. More resources, already approved by Congress for Homeland Security, need to be provided to each state and to the National Guard Bureau for a more robust first responder and Guard response plan. LTG H. Steven Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, is quoted as saying, "When you call out the Guard, you call out America."<sup>31</sup>



## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Gordon England, *Strategy of Homeland Defense and Civil Support* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, June 2005), iii.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Sammons, "Bush Offers Pentagon As 'Lead Agency' in Disasters," *Washington Times*, 26 September 2005, section A, p.1.

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